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AN AUTHENTIC ACCOUNT OF THE SHAKSPERIAN MANUSCRIPTS, &c.

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AN
AUTHENTIC ACCOUNT
OF THE
SHAKSPERIAN MANUSCRIPTS.

IN Juſtice to the world, and to remove the odium under which my father labours, by publiſhing the manuſcripts brought forward by me as *Shakſpear's*, I think it neceſſary to give a true account of the buſineſs, hoping that whatever may occur in the following pages will meet with favor and forgiveneſs, when conſidered as the act of a boy.

My education is no otherwiſe material to the public, than to ſhew that the ſchools at *Kenſington*, *Ealing*, *Soho-ſquare*, and three years ſpent at *Amiens*, and the colledge of *Eu* in *Normandy*, were to qualify me for the law, and at the age of ſixteen, I was articled to a gentleman of eminence in *New-Inn*.

My father having a taſte for old and curious tracts, I imbibed a liking for the ſame purſuit, and attended much more to book-ſtalls, than to *Blackſtone*, or *Coke* upon *Littleton*.

Frequently after dinner my father would read the different accounts of *Shakſpear*, and ſay, it was wonderful, out of ſo many thouſand lines which he muſt have wrote, that no veſtige remained but his ſignature to the will in the *Commons*, and his name affixed to the mortgage deed preſented by Mr. *Wallis* to Mr. *Garrick*; this was often repeated, and, with enthuſiaſtick praiſes of *Shakſpear*, my father would often ſay, that if there ever was a man inſpired, *Shakſpear* was that man.

Curioſity

Curioſity led me to look at the ſignatures publiſhed in *Stevens's Shakſpear*, and it occured to me, that if ſome old writing could be produced, and paſſed for *Shakſpear's*, it might occaſion a little mirth, and ſhew how far *credulity* would go in the ſearch for antiquities.

Having one day purchaſed a thin quarto tract of the time of *Elizabeth*, illuminated and bound in vellum, with her arms on the cover, I determined on trying an experiment with it, and for the purpoſe wrote a letter (in imitation of the hand of that period) as from the author of the book, making it the preſentation copy from himſelf to the queen.

I wrote this epiſtle with common ink, weakened with water, but found its appearance too modern, notwithſtanding I determined on ſhewing it; but before I went home from chambers, where it was contriv'd, I call'd on a book-binder in *New-Inn* paſſage, of the name of *Laurie*, and laughingly told

him what I had contrived; then, producing the letter, I aſk'd him his opinion? he told me it was well done, and might deceive many.

A young man working in the ſhop then ſaid, he could give me a compoſition which would have much more the appearance of old ink; I begg'd he would, upon which he mix'd a few drops of acid with ſome other liquid (uſed in marbling the covers of books) in a vial; then writing a few words on paper, held it to the fire to ſhew its effect, when the letters turn'd completely brown. Having procured this, I went back to chambers, and re-wrote the letter, which I took home and ſhewed my father, who thought it genuine. This, and the book I exchanged with him for ſome other tract. It was the firſt thing of the kind I ever attempted, but after I had wrote a great quantity of the *Shakſpear* manuſcripts, I thought my firſt attempt, ſo badly executed, that I again got it from my father, and deſtroyed it, fearing a diſcovery.

Soon

Soon after my father went into the country, it being long vocation, I obtained permiſſion of the gentleman with whom I was articled, to accompany him. The laſt place we viſited before our return to town, was *Srtatford* upon *Avon*, where we remained about ten days; during which time, my father made eager enquiries concerning *Shakſpear*, but acquired little more knowledge than thoſe who went before him.

We viſited *Clopton Houſe*, about a mile from *Stratford*, the gentleman who occupied it, behaved to us with much civility. On my father ſaying, he wiſhed to know any thing relative to our *Bard?* the gentleman replied, that had he been there a few weeks ſooner, he could have given him a great quantity of his, and his family's letters. My father, much aſtoniſhed, begged to know what was become of them? The gentleman's anſwer was, that having ſome young partridges which he wiſhed to bring up, he had, for the purpoſe, cleared out a ſmall appartment wherein theſe papers lay, and burnt a large baſket-full of them,

he ſaid they were all rotten as tinder, but to many of them, he could plainly perceive the ſignature of *William Shakſpear*; and turning to his wife, ſaid to her, "Don't yon remember it my Dear?" Her anſwer was, "Yes, perfectly well, and you know at the time, I blamed you for deſtroying them." My father exclaimed, "Good God, Sir! you do not know what an injury the world has ſuſtained by the loſs of them." He then begged permiſſion to ſee the Room, which the gentleman acquieſced in, adding, "If there are any left Sir, you may have them, for they are but rubbiſh, and litter up the place." Accordingly, we proceeded into the chamber, but found no trace of any papers; and in every other part of the houſe our ſearch proved equally ineffectual.

Having, by the many converſations which paſſed, imbibed my father's enthuſiaſm for *Shakſpear*, that led me not only to ſearch, but alſo to attempt what I ſhall after relate.

We returned to town, I attended chambers as uſual; two perſons being at that time with

with me, one ſoon quitted the law, and *Foſter Powell*, the well known *Pedeſtrian*, who was the other, ſhortly after died; I was then left alone, had it been otherwiſe, I ſhould have found no opportunity of writing the papers.

My father would often laviſh his uſual praiſes on *Shakſpear*, and frequently add, that he would give all his curious books to become poſſeſſed of a ſingle line of his hand writing.

An idea having ſtruck me, that I might perhaps be fortunate enough to find a ſignature of his, that induced me to examine a number of deeds and other papers which I met with in the courſe of my reſearches: I alſo carefully looked over many uſeleſs deeds at chambers, but without ſucceſs.

For mere frolick and diverſion, I ſoon after formed the plan of attempting to imitate his hand, and for that purpoſe copied out as nearly, as I could, the fac ſimilies of his name to the will in the *Commons*, and to the mortgage deed, both of which are to

be found in *Steven's Shakſpear*; I alſo took down the heads of the deed, with which I went to chambers, and wrote the leaſe between *William Shakſpear* and *John Heminges*, *Michael Fraſer* and *Elizabeth* his wife, it is erroneous in many reſpects, and thoſe who have ſeen it, may recollect it's inaccuracy, having ſtated, "*At the Globe by Thames.*" On telling this ſtory to Mr. *Wallis*, he referred to the copy of the mortgage deed before-mentioned, from which he *found* I had nearly worded that of *Michael Fraſer*, and laughingly ſaid, "It was ſurpriſing how it ſhould have eſcaped ſo many ſhrewd obſervers." I had before me a law paper of the time of King *James*, from which I took the ſtyle of writing, and afterwards affixed the names; it was wrote with the before-mentioned ink, which I had kept by me, but it's effect on parchment was different from that which it had on paper, only giving an appearance of common ink weakened with water. I wrote a deed in preference to any thing elſe, thinking it would more firmly ſtamp the ſignature as *Shakſpear's*.

I took

I took it home, and told my father, I had ſomething curious to ſhew him, on which I wiſhed to have his opinion. After looking over the deed, he aſſured me, that he thought it genuine. I then begged his acccptance of it, upon which he offered me any of his curious books, I told him, I would receive nothing.

And here I muſt aſſure the world, that I had no intention whatever of attempting any thing further, my object was only to give my father pleaſure, that wiſh accompliſhed, I was ſatisfied.

However, this deed was ſhewn, and was generally believed by thoſe who ſaw it; ſeveral perſons told me, that wherever it was found, there muſt undoubtedly be all the Manuſcripts of *Shakſpear* ſo long and vainly ſought for; my father likewiſe ſaid, he was certain that I knew of many more; thus urged, partly by the world, and my own vanity, I determined on attempting ſomething further,

Having

Having ſeen *Shakſpear's* father's *Profeſſion of Faith*, I thought I would attempt to form one for the ſon, and as I heard him much cenſured for the invocation to the Saints, and the ſuperſtitious manner in which it was compoſed, I reſolved on writing the ſon's perfectly ſimple, wiſhing thereby to prove *Shakſpear* a Proteſtant, that having been often a matter of doubt.

I procured a blank ſheet of old paper, being the outſide leaf of ſeveral others, on which accounts had been kept, but not being then acquainted with the water marks of the time, I carefully choſe leaves which had none at all, hearing many gentlemen ſay, if there were paper marks, they would go a great way to prove the manuſcripts authentic: I made enquiries, and learn'd that the *Jugg* was moſt prevalent in that Day. Accordingly, in all the papers I afterwards produced, I obtained as many marked with the *Jugg* as I poſſibly could, thoſe who have inſpected the papers, muſt remember to have ſeen it frequently occur.

I wrote

I wrote the *Profeſſion of Faith* without making a draft copy, placing before me the fac ſimiles I had made; and forming every letter in his name as he might have written them, the reſt were from my own imagination; when compleated, I took it home, all who heard it read, admired the ſimplicity of the ſtile.

I was much queſtioned as to where it came from? For ſome time I gave no particular anſwer, at length I found it neceſſary to ſay ſomething, and for that purpoſe framed the following ſtory!——

That I had, by mere chance, formed an acquaintance with a gentleman, and being one day at dinner with him, expreſſing my partiality for old books, as well as the autographs of great perſonages, I ſaid, the gentleman appointed me to meet him, and told me I might rummage over a large quantity of old deeds and papers which had deſcended to him from his father, who had practiſed the law, and acquired a great fortune,

fortune; I added, that for ſome time I neglected calling according to my promiſe, alledging that as he was a young man, he had only meant perhaps to laugh at me; however, one day being near the place, curioſity prompted me to call; the gentleman, I ſaid, was rather angry at my remiſsneſs and breach of promiſe, but having made an apology, he permitted me to go into the next room, where I ſaw a great quantity of papers tied up in bundles, having ſearched for ſome time, I at length found the deed before mentioned, which I took to the gentleman, who was much aſtoniſhed, but ſaid, ſince I promiſed you all you ſhould find worthy your notice, I will not be worſe than my word, then deſiring me to make him a copy, he gave it me.

But when I had wrote more papers, the world wondered how any man could be weak enough to part with ſuch a treaſure; to reconcile them to a belief of this, I added the following ſtory: that in ſearching among my friend's deeds, I had found one which aſcertained to him ſome property, long a matter of litigation and

and diſpute; upon this he promiſed me every thing I ſhould find appertaining to *Shakſpear*, and further, to ſtop all enquiries as to his name, *&c.* I added, that being a man of large fortune, he did not chooſe to undergo the impertinent queſtionings of the world, for which reaſon, he had bound me on oath, to ſecrecy, and the better to ſtrengthen this, I hinted, that his father perhaps might have detained the papers illegally in the courſe of his practice, and ſhould his name be known, it would undoubtedly lead to a diſcovery, and throw a ſlur on the honour of his family; by ſuch means, I for ſome time ſtopped all enquiries.

I ſhall now ſpeak of Mr. *Talbot*, who has been ſo much talked of in the buſineſs, and explain the reaſons. I had for ſome time known him, he was alſo placed with a gentleman of *New Inn*, but his articles expired before I attempted theſe Manuſcripts; he came frequently to chambers, and told me he was certain the deed which I had given my father was not original, but a pro-

duction

duction of my own; I muſt add that he well knew I had a facility at copying old hand writings, having often ſeen me do ſo before I wrote the manuſcripts; I firmly denied the charge, but a few days after, whilſt I was buſily employed at writing ſome of the papers which I afterwards gave my father, he came in ſo inſtantaneouſly, that he caught me in the fact; no longer able to deny the charge, I bound him to ſecrecy, alledging the anger of my father ſhould he know the truth; he promiſed never to betray me, nor can I ſay but that he behaved all through the buſineſs with the ſtricteſt honour and integrity.—He ſoon quitted *London* for *Dublin*; on parting, I aſſured him, that I would correſpond and relate what occurred; this is all Mr. *Talbot*'s concern in the affair; I have already mentioned how I procured the ink; moſt of the old paper was purchaſed of a bookſeller of the name of *Verey*, in *Great May's Buildings*, *Saint Martin's Lane*, and the language I moſt ſolemnly declare to be all my own, no perſon having furniſhed me with a ſingle idea.

I wrote

I wrote the letter to *Cowley*, thereby wiſhing to prove *Shakſpear* a perfect good natured man; nothing was meant by the pen and ink drawing, however, the world ſaid it was certainly ſome witty *conundrum*, as to their not being able to explain it, there is nothing ſurpiſing in that, for I myſelf do not know it's meaning. My reaſons for writing *Heminge's* note and receipt I cannot at preſent recollect.—The letter to *Ann Hatherwaye*, his wife, was to ſhew his love for her, and that was alſo meant by the lines addreſſed to her; as for the lock of hair, it was more a childiſh frolic than any ways done to ſtrengthen the authenticity of the papers.

Having heard of the Lord *Southampton's* bounty to *Shakſpear*, I determined on writing the correſpondence between them on that ſubject; but, on enquiry, could not learn that any ſignature of his Lordſhip's was in exiſtance, I accordingly formed his mode of writing, merely from myſelf, and the better

to

to diſguiſe it from *Shakſpear's*, I wrote the whole with my left hand ; this was done to give more authenticity to the ſtory.

I may be faulty as to the exact time and order in which the different things were delivered to my father, but, having kept no account, I truſt that will not go to diſprove the truth of my preſent narration.

Amongſt other gentlemen who came to view the manuſcripts were Dr. *P——r.* and Dr. *W———n*; I was in my father's ſtudy at the time, they paſſed the higheſt encomiums on the ſtile of the papers in general; and I particularly well remember, after having heard read the *Profeſſion of Faith*, one of them uſed the following words to my father, " Mr. *Ireland*, we have very fine things in " our *church ſervice*, and our *litany* abounds " with beauties, *but here is a man has diſ-* " *tanced us all.*" I ſcarce could refrain from laughter on hearing ſuch praiſes laviſhed on myſelf, particularly on a compoſition not even ſtudied when wrote, I was however

ſtruck

ſtruck with aſtoniſhment at having attracted the applauſe of two ſuch learned men, then I firſt began to think I had any abilities.

I wrote Queen *Elzabeth*'s letter from her ſignature only, which I copied from an original in my father's poſſeſſion, this letter was produced to make our *Bard* appear noticed noticed by the greateſt perſonage of his time, and thereby add, if poſſible, freſh luſtre to his name.

At a broker's in *Butcher Row*, I one day ſaw hanging up for ſale a coloured drawing, thinking it might ſerve my purpoſe, I purchaſed it, and went to chambers, where, having ſome water colours, I painted in the letters *W. S.* and the titles of the ſeveral plays, I likewiſe inſerted in the corner, the arms of *Shakſpear*, but was ſo unacquainted with them as to make the ſpear run the contrary way to what it really ſhould do; on the back of this drawing was the figure of a *Dutchman*, this I altered to the character of *Shylock*, by painting in the knife and ſcales. What I conceive the

deſign originally to have repreſented was the contraſt of a money getting old father, to a ſon ſquandering his property in gay apparel and diſſipation; the drawing is certainly very old, but the writing, arms, ſcales knife, *&c.* were all added by myſelf.

Many perſons having ſaid, that if the original manuſcript of one of his printed plays ſhould be found, it would prove whether he wrote all the ribaldry attributed to him in the firſt quarto's.—That lead me to write over in the old hand the Tragedy of King *Lear*, and make alterations where I thought the lines beneath him, one of theſe I ſhall quote. After *Lear's* death, the Duke offers *Kent* his ſervices, which he refuſes: in all the printed copies *Kent* repeats the following couplet ſo much ridiculed.

Kent.—I have a journey, Sir, ſhortly to go,
My maſter calls, and I muſt not ſay no.

In lieu of which I inſerted the following lines,—

" Thanks,

" Thanks, Sir, but I go to that unknown land,
" That chains each pilgrim faſt within it's ſoil,
" By living men moſt ſhunned moſt dreaded,
" Still my good maſter this ſame journey took,
" He calls me, I am content, and ſtraight obey;
" Then farewell world, the buſy ſcene is done,
" *Kent* lived moſt true, *Kent* dies moſt like a
" man."

By ſuch alterations the world ſuppoſed that all the ribaldry in his other plays was not written by himſelf but foiſtered in by the players and printers, herein it cannot be ſaid I injured the reputation of *Shakſpear*, on the contrary, the world thought him a much more pure and even writer than before.

To prove the papers ſtill more genuine, I wrote the agreements between *Lowin* and *Condell* the players. I alſo produced the play houſe receipts, and other accounts, thereby to prove *Shakſpear* correct in matters of the moſt trivial nature.—Among theſe were the receipts for playing before Lord *Leiceſter*, the ſum there mentioned was very

high for that period: By this I meant to ſhew the eſteem in which his company was held before all others, for I knew there were at that time ſeveral play houſes in *London*. The ſtrings with which I tied the bundles were unravelled from a piece of old tapeſtry, part of which I left in the hands of Mr. *Wallis*, about the ſame time I entruſted him with the ſecret.

My ink now failed me, I applied a ſecond time to the book binder's man, and obtained a larger vial full, the remains of which I have alſo given to Mr. *Wallis*: thus I continued, and finding ſo many join in my father's belief, I thought with *Richard*,—

"*The work went bravely on.*"

At length I determined on writing a play, and having often obſerved a drawing of my father's from a deſign of *Mortimer's*, on the ſubject of *Rowena* preſenting wine to *Vortigern*, I thought this ſtory might perhaps ſerve,

ſerve, and accordingly refer'd to *Holinſhed's* Chronicle, which my father had; this I did when no one was preſent, finding it applicable to my purpoſe, I plan'd the ſtory of the play, which I afterwards produced: it conſiſts of more than two thouſand lines.— When aſked for the originals, I made anſwer, that my friend would not deliver them till I had tranſcribed the whole; thus I gained time to compoſe and write the play in the old hand; At the time of it's completion, I was about nineteen years of age, the world praiſed many parts, but ſaid it was uneven, having the ſame errors as are uſually found in many of *Shakſpear's* plays, it was generally thought ſuperior to the worſt of his plays, and much inferior to his capital one's; I heard and ſmiled at theſe remarks, not a little ſurpriſed that I could at ſo young an age at all imitate him.

When Mr. *Talbot* heard of the play in *Ireland*, he coolly wrote, informing me of his ſurpriſe that I had not let him into this ſecret, for to

ſpeak the truth, I had long neglected corresponding according to my promiſe, having to compoſe and write all the before mentioned things; I ſent him word I had attempted and wrote the play; after this we correſponded regularly, and I always ſpoke freely on the ſubject of the manuſcripts.

I wrote a few leaves of *Hamlet*, with trivial alteration, as I had done in *Lear*, I likewiſe finiſhed other receits, and executed a coloured head of *Shakſpear* on parchment, round which I affixed the names of ſeveral players of that day; I acquired this knowledge by looking into the folio edition of his plays.

As it was the general opinion, that if a deſcendant of *Shakſpear*'s could be found, he might claim the papers, I determined on proving that a friendſhip had ſubſiſted between our *Bard* and ſome perſon of the name of *Ireland*; for that purpoſe I wrote the deed of gift, and formed the ſtory of his ſaving *Shakſpear* from "*drowning*," as I thought that

that the beſt method of accounting for their great friendſhip, and the bequeſts made to him by *Shakſpear*. I alſo wrote the tributary lines, and made the drawing of *Ireland's* houſe; and to ſtop all claims whatever to the papers, I ſaid, that my friend told me, they originally belonged to one of our anceſtors, and that he had given them to me as a matter of right.

My reaſon for appearing ſo much in public, was to make the world think me a giddy thoughtleſs young man, incapable of producing the papers.

Mr. *Talbot* came to *England*, and was much aſtoniſhed at the variety of things I had wrote; we deſtroyed mutually all our letters on the ſubject, and agreed, for the future, never to ſpeak openly on the buſineſs.

As the world began to doubt, I begged him to become a party in the ſtory, he with much heſitation conſented. I then informed my father, that Mr. *Talbot* was alſo concerned,

upon which he desired his account of the manuscripts, but Mr. *T.* not knowing the story he should tell, and fearing to contradict what I might have said before, informed my father that he would, in a few days, send a written account of the whole business. To this my father very reluctantly agreed; and previous to Mr, *T.* leaving town, we planned the story which he afterwards sent.

I continued as usual producing papers of different kinds, partly to add to the mass which I thought would strengthen their authenticity, and partly because the world did not altogether doubt them, and that I found them still praised by the *Literati.* I also wrote manuscript notes on books to about the number of fifty, all which I gave to my father.

Not owing to himself only, but frequently urged by other gentlemen, my father determined on publishing the papers; I begged he would desist, he made answer, that the world should not be deprived of such a treasure; at length,

length, afraid to tell this narrative, which he would not have believed, and not knowing what ſtep to take, I one day, as my laſt effort, aſſured him, that if he was bent on publiſhing the papers it muſt be done at his own riſk, for that my friend would have nothing to do in the buſineſs; he gladly replied, that he would take all upon himſelf, thus, finding it impoſſible to ſtop him, I was compelled to ſuffer the publiſhing of the papers.

I wrote the deed of truſt to *John Hemings*, diſtantly hinting, that the gentleman who gave the Manuſcripts was a deſcendant of his, and that his anceſtor had not fulfilled the bequeſts mentioned in that deed, but kept them to himſelf; this I alledged was cauſe ſufficient for the concealment of his name. Had I not been urged to write this Pamphlet, I ſhould have compoſed the Interlude of the *Virgin Queen*, and the play of *King Henry* the Seventh, mentioned in the deed of truſt.

The play of *Vortigern* was then agreed for, and with much delay brought forward; the world

world condemned it, but that did not leſſen the ſatisfaction I felt in having at ſo early an age wrote a piece which was not only acted, but brought forth as the work of the greateſt of men.

Mr. *Malone*'s very tedious epiſtle then appeared, the *forgery*, he ſays is weak, and poorly contrived, why then ſhould he beſtow ſo much time and labour, and dive into antiquities, or ſearch regiſters of births, marriages, deaths, *&c.* and ſpin out an Epiſtle to Lord *Charlemont* of upwards of four hundred pages, to prove, what as he ſays, was viſible to the meaneſt capacity, but moſt of the time he was confeſſedly in a dream.

I wrote the play of King *Henry* the Second, of which I only executed three leaves in the old hand, now in my father's poſſeſſion; it was thought by many ſuperior to *Vortigern*.

At length the world in general accuſed my father of being a party concerned in writing the

the papers, and then I firſt began to feel uneaſy.

Mr. *Talbot*'s letter, I muſt here mention, came to hand, containing the ſtory which we had agreed to tell, and I ſoon after received one part of which I have here tranſcribed, as it goes to prove myſelf alone author of the manuſcripts.

6th January, 1796.

Dear *Sam*,

" It is now a month, I believe, ſince I " wrote to your father a particular account " of the diſcovery of *Vortigern*, with every " thing that has paſſed before and ſince the " the fortunate finding it at *H*———'*s*; I " wrote by the ſame poſt to yourſelf, begged " you to ſhew *H*——— the letter I wrote " your father, and keep a copy yourſelf; now " I think it rather hard I am not favoured " with an anſwer, and that my particular " requeſt is not complied with.—I aſked for " a copy of *Vortigern* and *Rowena*, as cur-

" tailed

" tailed for repreſentation; now, *Sam*, though
" you neglect me ſo much as to with-hold
" the copy of the play, which you know
" when in *London* I had not time to read,
" and which you may naturally ſuppoſe I
" would wiſh to know almoſt as I would
" all *Shakſpear's* works, yet mark how I am
" ſituated, and then you will not blame me
" for renewing my requeſt; every one knows
" here the concern I have with *Vortigern*
" and *Rowena*, and every one aſks for the par-
" ticulars: I then ſhow the copy of the letter
" ſent your father; but when I am aſked as to
" the play, and its merits, plot, beauties, *&c.*
" *I know nothing*. It is much wondered at
" that I can give no account of its coming
" out; ſome aſk me if I have not in my
" own poſſeſſion any ſcrap of the writings of
" *Shakſpear*.—So, *Sam*, I requeſt you will
" ſend me ſome bill, receipt, or letter of
" his, *&c*, *&c*."

By this part of Mr. *Talbot*'s letter, I mean to prove that he knew nothing of the play of *Vortigern*, had he aided me in writing it, he certainly

certainly would not diſclaim all knowledge of its *merits, plot, or beauties.* He certainly knew the fact, and that was all; as to his joining in the ſtory, he did it at my moſt earneſt requeſt, though much againſt his own inclination.

A committee of gentlemen was now called to inſpect the manuſcripts, and report what they thought concerning their authenticity; I was obliged to be preſent, many queſtions were put to me about the papers, my anſwer was, that I attended there only to exculpate my father from the *odium* which was heaped on him, but to anſwer nothing farther; I likewiſe offered to make oath, that my father was no ways whatever concerned; but this was over-ruled by ſome gentleman preſent. Other committees were held, in which Mr. *Talbot*'s letter was frequently read, and at one of theſe, a petition was drawn up, ſigned by the committee, ſtating my father's ſituation with the world, which I was required to deliver to my friend, when alone, I determined rather than he ſhould undergo ſo much unmerited

merited blame, that I would myſelf come forwardwith the truth.

I therefore, at the next meeting, ſaid, that the perſon from whom I had the papers would reveal the ſecret to any two gentlemen of reſpectability, for that purpoſe a liſt was made, which I was to ſhew my friend, thoſe names which he did not approve he was to blot out, but any two of thoſe he left ſtanding, and who would receive the ſecret, to them he would communicate it.

At the next meeting I delivered the liſt, having only marked out the names of a few who had been ſanguine in their belief of the papers, not liking to hurt their feelings, but of thoſe gentlemen whoſe names I left ſtanding, ſome were out of town, and others did not chooſe to undertake the embaſſy.

It having been obſerved by me, as before ſtated, that the gentleman was under apprehenſions for his ſituation ſhould the truth be known, and ſome one of the committee ſuggeſting

geſting that he ought to apply for legal advice in the buſineſs, where he might with ſafety communicate the affair, I went myſelf to Mr. *Wallis*, and told him nearly this ſtory, under a ſtrict injunction of ſecrecy, at the ſame time giving him in writing a ſhort account of the principal matters herein contained, which I wrote before him, as well in the old hand as my own; he likewiſe put ſeveral queſtions to me, as to the reaſons which lead me to attempt ſo many different things, which I immediately anſwered in writing; it is now five Months ſince, and on comparing the reaſons given in this account, with thoſe left in his hands, they are found to coincide; and to which I refer any perſon who deſires to be ſatisfied.

Still the world accuſed my father of being a party concern'd:—— This was frequently mentioned, which rendered him unhappy: He wrote to Mr. *Talbot* to know if he would make affidavit to the truth of the ſtory, Mr. *T*—— anſwered, that if *if I would join with him* he then would make oath, that

no

no one, except us two, and a third perſon, knew the ſecret; this he did, well aſſured, that I could not enter into any ſuch affidavit, there being no third perſon at all concern'd; on my refuſal, my father, of courſe, laid all the blame on me; and to prove what I have aſſerted, Mr. *Talbot* has ſeveral times been requeſted to make the oath alone, but will not conſent.

My father left town during his abſence, I form'd the reſolution of quitting the houſe, as I could not tell the truth, and live with him after to be a witneſs of his unhappineſs; beſides, he complained of the ſecret being told to another perſon, and not himſelf; I therefore put my plan in execution.—As a proof of my father's feelings at that time, I inſert the following letter which he ſent me; thoſe who peruſe it may conceive a father's anxiety, and my embarraſſed ſituation.

" It is now more than a week, my dear " *Sam*, ſince I left *London*, and not a word

" or

" or a line from you : in the ſituation, un-
" ſettled as you are, you cannot ſuppoſe but
" that my mind is much agitated, both on
" your account and that of the family.——

" I expected, according to your promiſe,
" that you would certainly have written to
" me and have pointed out what was your
" plan :——And not only ſo, but your in-
" tentions with regard to the papers. I do
" aſſure you, my ſtate is truly wretched on
" both accounts ; I have no reſt either night
" or day, which might be much alleviated
" by a more open and candid conduct on
" your ſide ; ſurely, if there is a perſon for
" whom you can for a moment feel, it muſt
" be for a parent, who has never ceaſed to
" render you every comfort and attention
" from your earlieſt moment of exiſtance to
" the preſent. —I think you muſt ſometimes
" reflect, and place yourſelf in your imagi-
" nation as at a future period of life, having
" a ſon, and being in ſuch a predicament as
" I ſtand at preſent, and then judging what
" muſt *be your ſtate of mind*, and what muſt
" be *mine at preſent*.

 I do

" I do not mean reproaches by this letter,
" but to aſſure you, that if you cannot think
" me your friend, I fear you will be deceived
" in all friendſhips you may in future form. I
" do not recollect that any conduct of mine
" toward you, has been other than that of a
" friend and companion, not that of a rigid or
" remorſe parent? It is therefore doubly
" unnatural, that I ſhould be found to ap-
" ply for information through any channel
" whatever, when I ought to hear it vo-
" luntarily from yourſelf. You ſeem to be
" eſtranging yourſelf, not only from me, but
" from all your family, and all my acquaint-
" ances. Reflect well what you do, and what
" determinations you make, for this is the
" moment that may, in all probability render
" you comfortable in your future eſtabliſh-
" ment, and future ſituation, or make you an
" alien to happineſs for ever. I have heard
" of my ſituation with the world, as to the
" papers, at *Reading*, from many gentlemen
" there, who all agree, that my ſtate is truly
" a pitiable one, and all ſeem to dread the
" event; I know not the nature of your
" oaths and engagements, nor does the world;

" but

" but it is univerſally allowed, that no ob-
" ligation ſhould lead a parent into ruin.—
" If the papers are to be eſtabliſhed as ge-
" nuine, why delay to furniſh me with the
" documents ſo lately promiſed? But I will
" ſay no more on the ſubject at preſent.—By
" a paragraph in the *Sun* of *Thurſday* laſt,
" it ſhould appear, that though I am not in
" the ſecret, ſome perſons are." The pa-
ragraph runs thus—" We are at length
" enabled to form a *deciſive opinion* with re-
" gard to the *Manuſcripts* in the poſſeſſion
" of Mr. *Ireland*, though motives of delicacy
" at preſent prevent us from rendering that
" opinion publick"! Pray me give a line by
" to-morrow's poſt, as I am impatient to hear
" from you, and believe me your very ſincere
" friend, and affectoinate father,"

Samuel Ireland.

June 5, *Sunday.*

I then aſk'd Mr. *Wallis* what I could do to exonerate my father; he drew up a paper which I ſign'd, and have here inſerted.

In juſtice to my father, and to remove the *odium* under which he labours reſpecting the papers publiſhed by him as the manuſcripts of *Shakſpear*, I do hereby ſolemnly declare, that they were given to him by me as the manuſcripts of *Shakſpear*, and that he was totally ignorant and unacquainted with the ſource from whence they came, or with any matter relating to the ſame, or to any thing ſave what was told him by myſelf; and that he publiſhed them without any knowledge, or even the ſmalleſt intention of fraud or impoſition, but under a firm belief and perſuaſion of their authenticity, as I had given him to underſtand they were ſo.

W. H. Ireland.

17 *January*, 1796.

Still my father was diſſatisfied; nor would the world believe that he was not concern'd in the buſineſs.——I afterwards wrote him a letter, confeſſing, that I was really the author, of which I kept no copy, or ſhould undoubtedly have here inſerted it.—This proved as ineffectual as any thing I before had done, for he ſtill thought *Shakſpear* the author of the papers, and me totally incapable of writing them.—

I ſhall inſert a meſſage left in writing with Mr. *Wallis*, which ſtill goes to prove my father a ſtranger to the whole affair.——

" That I inſiſt on having the affidavit " drawn up by *Sam*, and ſign'd and ſworn " before a magiſtrate, in order to its being " ſent to *Talbot*, and then to be laid before " the public, and I likewiſe inſiſt on having " the remainder of the papers ſo often pro- " miſed me."

The papers which my father here alludes to, and of which he has a liſt, were thoſe

which I intended to have written, had not the buſineſs taken ſuch a turn as it has done.

I here introduce a ſpeech, the original of which, with my various alterations, was delivered, with many other things, to the care of Mr. *Wallis*, leaving the world to judge of its merits if it poſſeſſes any.

On contemplating Weſtminſter Abbey.

" O! my good lord how irkſome paſſed the
" time,
" While in yon porch I did wait your coming;
" Yet as this chryſtal arch, this bright heaven
" Doth ſhine upon the emeral tipped wave,
" And paints upon the deep each paſſing
" cloud;
" E'en ſo the ſmalleſt and moſt gentle plant
" That waves before the breath of thee ſweet
" heaven,
" To man gives food for contemplation;

" And

" And ſhows how ſoon this blazing frame of
" youth
" Muſt ſink on Age's chilling icy bed,
" And dwindle down to ſecond nothingneſs;
" Look but on yon clock thoſe lanky fingers,
" The tolling heralds of ſwift winged time,
" Whoſe clapper wakens men from drowſy
" ſleep;
" Changing the dreary ſtillneſs of black night
" To days firſt infancy, the bluſhing morn;
" While bleſt *Aurora* rears her purple creſt,
" And tip-toe ſtands, ſhaking her golden hair,
" Eager to viſit the buſy ſons of men:
" Her blazing journey ended, down ſhe ſinks,
" And ſo I liken her to man's ſtrange end.
" Look on yon pile, under whoſe fretted roof,
" So many kings have ſeized the precious
" gem
" Of royalty, and ſucked the courtiers
" Lip laboured lies.
" Where are ye now, dead alas and rotten;
" O! my good lord, let us from hence away,
" This ſpot doth ſmell too ſtrong of royal
" duſt.

" Throwing its lures to catch the minds of
" men;
" Blowing in their ears the feverous blaſt
" Of mirth, feaſts, merriment, proſperity;
" Till on a ſudden grappling with their ſouls,
" Thou knitteſt them at once in death *eterne*."

This ſpeech I meant to have introduced in a play taken from the life of *William* the Conqueror; it was to have been ſpoke by Earl *Edwyn*, who conſpired againſt him in conſequence of his tyrannical government: he was to wait near the Abbey in diſguiſe, for *Marcarus* another conſpirator, and there make this ſpeech.—The plan of this play, as well as ſeveral others from *Engliſh* hiſtory, I have lately depoſited with Mr. *Wallis*, together with many other things relating to this buſineſs, where they may be inſpected by thoſe whoſe curioſity may lead them to require that ſatisfaction.

On *Thurſday* the 17th of *November* I wrote the following letter to Mr. *Talbot*.

Dr.

Dr. *Montague*,

" The various things which have paſſed " ſince I laſt wrote to you cannot be here " repeated,—I only beg you will ſay nothing " more about the papers, nor take any trou- " ble in explaining the buſineſs to my father. " I find it neceſſary to keep the world no " longer in ſuſpence, and am preparing a " circumſtantial account of the whole, where- " in I ſhall inform them of the truth, *that I* " *am the Author*; be aſſured I will excuſe " you in every point for what you have ſaid " concerning their authenticity, and take it " all upon myſelf,—you may ſuppoſe what I " have undergone to bring me to ſuch a " confeſſion, after what paſſed between us, " but I find that truth will always prevail.

I remain your's ever,

W. H. Ireland.

That the world may not ſuppoſe any thing lurks behind, this expreſſion in my letter (after what paſſed between us) I ſhall explain.

plain its meaning.—On Mr. *Talbot*'s quitting me, I made him a promiſe. that I would not tell the buſineſs on any account, unleſs he was willing, which promiſe I have not faithfully obſerved, this I hope will be excuſed, as my peculiar ſituation alone cauſed the breach of it.—

Before I conclude, I ſhall ſum up this account, and am willing to make affidavit to the following declarations, as well as to the whole of this narration.

Firſt, I ſolemnly declare that my father was perfectly unacquainted with the whole affair, believing the papers moſt firmly the productions of *Shakſpear*.

Scondly, —That I am myſelf both the author and writer, and have had no aid or aſſiſtance from any ſoul living, and that I ſhould never have gone ſo far, but that the world praiſed the papers ſo much, and thereby flattered my vanity.

Thirdly,

Thirdly,—That any publication which may appear tending to prove the manuſcripts genuine, or contradict what is here *ſtated*, is falſe ; this being the true account.

W. H. Ireland.

Here then I conclude, moſt ſincerely regretting any offence I may have given the world, or any particular individual, truſting at the ſame time, they will deem the whole the act of a boy, without any evil or bad intention, but hurried on thoughtleſs of any danger that awaited to enſnare him.

Should I attempt another play, or any other ſtage performance, I ſhall hope the public will lay aſide all prejudice my conduct may have deſerved, and grant me that kind indulgence which is the certain inmate of every *Engliſhman*'s boſom.

MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM